

Duxbury's Early Settlers:

Peter Browne, part 2

[This is a continuation of a story that appeared in the Dec. 8 Clipper about the Peter Browne landgrant. -Ed.]

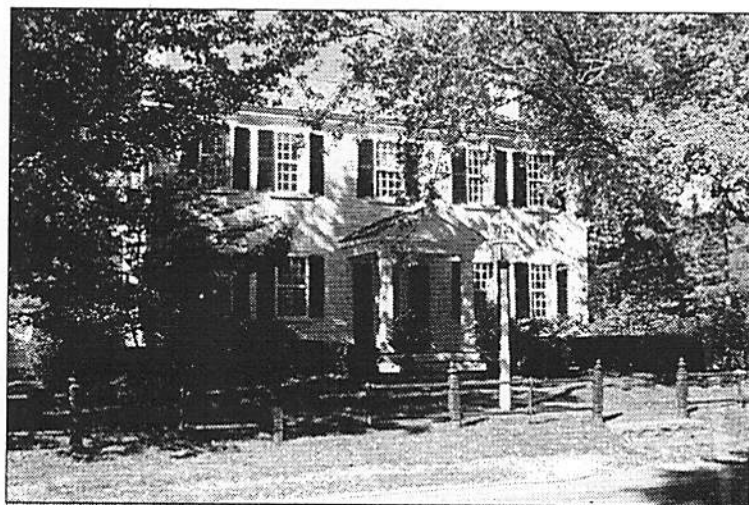
Surplus Street is probably one of the oldest roads in town. It has an interesting and storied history. Probably it was an Indian trail to get from Pem-



BY LAMONT "MONTY" HEALY

broke (Mat-takeeset) to the shore in the summer-time. It was definitely used at the time of the settlement of Duxbury

as an access to the shore. Even though all of the shore lots were granted to individuals, provisions were made for roads to the bay and specifically mentioned in deeds. Eventually, the road was used for access from the "Bosworth house to the (third and fourth) meeting house."



338 Washington St., where Ahira Wadsworth's widow, Olive, acquired her right of dower in 1867 that afforded her the right to move into part of the house occupied by Martin Waterman's widow, Lydia (Soule) Waterman.

The almshouse was also originally located on the road, but after it burned, the "new" poorhouse was built on Depot Street at the corner of what is now Prior Farm Road, and is now a private residence. During the shipbuilding era the area was known as "Devil's Corner," "Hell's Corner" and sometimes as "Sodom" or "where the wicked people lived," probably the source of Wicked Hill off Partridge Road. The respectable women of the town always requested escorts when walking in the area.

We believe that Surplus Street got its name from President Andrew Jackson's declaration of a surplus of 36 million dollars in 1836 to be divided amongst the 26 states by their federal representation. Massachusetts returned its portion, \$1,338,173.58, to the cities and towns in proportion to their populations. Duxbury's improved road thus became Surplus Street. The street was accepted in 1882, probably after being called Surplus since 1837.

There are more "date boarded" houses on this grant than on any other in town. There are at least 35 houses deemed old enough to show their history on the front of the house. The area of Surplus and Washington streets was, for a time, referred to as the "Village" and for the first part of the 19th century was the most densely populated part of Duxbury.

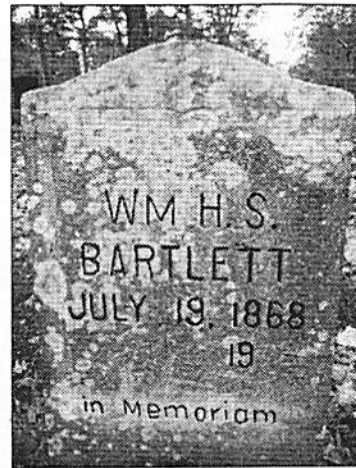
The continuation of a road down to the bay seems to be by Water Street (thus how it got its name). Further evidence of this is that the house at 12 Water Street was built by Job Sampson in 1794 several years before the existence of Washington Street. The road to the bay might have been jogged to get by the Bosworth house, which was also built in 1794. Job was a descendent of pilgrim Henry Samson through Henry's son Caleb. At the time he bought the Water Street property it contained over four acres on the north side the Street and the property included (or later included) a wharf or "landing place" that was jointly owned by several neighbors. The current owners of 12 Water St. are John and Betsey Hagerty. It is appropriate that John should own a house that is over 200 years old, as he was the owner of Cohasset Colonials, a colonial furniture business.

The house currently owned by the Riegel family (William and Nancy) at 14 Surplus St. was built by Joseph S. Thomas in 1824. Joseph, a blacksmith and veteran of the Mexican War, built the house for his new bride, Betsey Holmes, on land owned by Betsey's father, Bradford Holmes. Inexplicably, after living in the house for only two years, and with an infant child, Joseph and Betsey decided to sell the "dwelling house, blacksmith shop and coal house" back to Mr. Holmes. As far as we know there was no trouble between the two families, business was good, and the neighborhood pleasant. Still, they left the new house and moved to another part of town. Everything indicates that Betsey remained on good terms with her family and shared in her father's estate, yet no family stories give any reason for the sudden sale of the Thomas' new house.

Another mystery surrounds the houses at 33 Surplus St., currently owned by Charles (celebrated Clipper cartoonist) Rogerson, and 37 Surplus St., currently owned by Vance and Carolyn Loisselle. Both of these houses are shown as being built by Seth Bartlett in 1833. This is most likely true, but probably 37 was built as the dwelling and 33 was built as a "carriage house" and later converted to a residence. There is some thought that the carriage house was moved from Bumblebee Lane across the street. Local history has the source of the

name of Bumblebee Lane as the several "Bouncing Bets" plants in the area attracted the bees. But, none of this is the mystery associated with these two houses.

Henry Bartlett, Seth's only surviving son, married Emma Jones Stowall of New Bedford. They had three children, Etta E., William H.S., and Charles Bradford Bartlett. When Seth Bartlett died in 1884 he left both houses to his wife, Nancy, and then after her death to Henry in trust for the three children. Henry lived in the house at 37 but both houses show his will in the chain of title (Very strange, but I'm not doing a title exam here). After Henry died in 1896 his wife, Emma, lived there until her death in 1935 at the age of 94. Her son Charlie, who was deaf, lived with her, as did her son William – for a time! William was a courier for a Boston bank and one day he got on a train to New York with a satchel of money, and as the Kingston Trio song "Charlie on the MTA" goes – "never to return"! Emma waited "til her dying day" for him to return. Before she died, she had a gravestone made and placed in Mayflower Cemetery with William's name, birth date and a death line with just "19__". This says a great deal about a mother's love. Now here is a research project, where did William H.S. Bartlett go?



William H.S. Bartlett's gravestone does not contain an exact date of death — because he got on a train to New York one day and disappeared, so his relatives in Duxbury never learned his exact fate.